

THE JOHN JAMIESON LECTURE

The Conversions of Scotland

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[*Auctorial foreword*]

When the Society invited me to give the first John Jamieson Lecture at Glasgow and Edinburgh in April 1997, I chose the above title to emphasise that Scotland – a large area sparsely peopled and outwith the northernmost Roman *limes* – had received Christianity on at least four occasions. These were, **1**, whatever is represented by Whithorn and Bede's "Nynia", early 5th century, from late or sub-Roman Britain, **2**, a slightly later incursion, I believed from Christian Gaul, at Kirkmadrine and the Rinns; **3**, the 6th-century foundations in Argyll and further north, from an Ireland that had received the Faith partly from Britain (Patrick and any predecessors) and partly from the Continent (431, Palladius), headed of course by Columba's monastery of Iona; and **4**, in south-east Scotland and southern Pictland, the 7th-century ecclesiastical domination by the Northumbrian Angles, themselves converted partly by the Irish and partly from south-east England, most readily symbolised by the short-lived see at Abercorn. Can so convoluted a sequence be matched from any comparable region around the Late Roman Empire? Yet, in "Columban Year" with its plethora of conferences and publications, there seemed little point in trying to say anything new under heading **3** above, and I had already put in print all that I knew about Abercorn, and **4** above.¹ My lecture was (I now admit) an excuse to lay before two Scottish audiences some entirely new discoveries germane to Kirkmadrine, **2**, and Whithorn, **1**; in the latter instance, updating what I had said in the first of the

¹ "Abercorn and the *Provincia Pictorum*", in *Beyond the Walls. Essays on the Prehistory and History of North Britain in Honour of George Jobey*, edd. C. Burgess and G. Miket (1984), 324-337.

Whithorn Lectures five years beforehand² and indeed covering a further revelation barely a fortnight in the open. These are the topics discussed below. I am grateful to the Society for honouring me with this invitation, and for hospitality, and to members of both audiences (including old friends and colleagues, and some former pupils) for pertinent comments and questions, and for subsequent helpful correspondence. When this appears in print, Peter Hill's *Whithorn and St. Ninian: the excavation of a monastic town 1984-91* will have been published. My special thanks go to its author for information in advance, encouragement, and a fruitful exchange of ideas about Scotland's "cradle of the Kirk".]

1. Whithorn: Latinus, Nynia and the first church

Among the dozen or so Christian Latin inscribed stones of post-Roman southern Scotland, the Whithorn "Latinus" pillar – here, 520 *Latinus*³ – takes pride of place. It is certainly the earliest and arguably the best-known of the group⁴ and stands now in the Historic Scotland site museum by Whithorn Priory Church. To the perspicacity of Derek Craig⁵ we owe the information that it was found, during his Priory excavations and restoration, by William Galloway in (probably) late 1888. Writing in November 1890 to Lt.-Gen. Pitt-Rivers, Galloway included his transcript of the top 7 lines, above line 1 being what he calls "the chrisma"; a small (first, or Constantinian) chi-rho, monogram of our X and P (*Fig. 1*). This, overlooked subsequently for a century, is actually detectable in some early photographs.⁶

² *Whithorn's Christian Beginnings. First Whithorn Lecture 19th September 1992* (Friends of the Whithorn Trust, 1992).

³ Inscriptions are cited by number (and key name) from R.A.S. Macalister, *Corpus Inscriptionum Insularum Celticarum*, 2 vols. (Dublin, 1945, 1949).

⁴ As most recently defined in my (1991, Glasgow) Dalrymple Lecture, printed as "The Early Christian Inscriptions of Southern Scotland", *Glasgow Archaeol. Journal*, 17 (1991-1992), 1-10.

⁵ His "Appendix 1. The Provenance of the Early Christian Inscriptions of Galloway", in Peter Hill's "Whithorn and St. Ninian" (1997).

⁶ E.g., in the Scottish Royal Commission's *Galloway, Vol. I, County of Wigtown Inventory* (1912), Fig. 109 A.

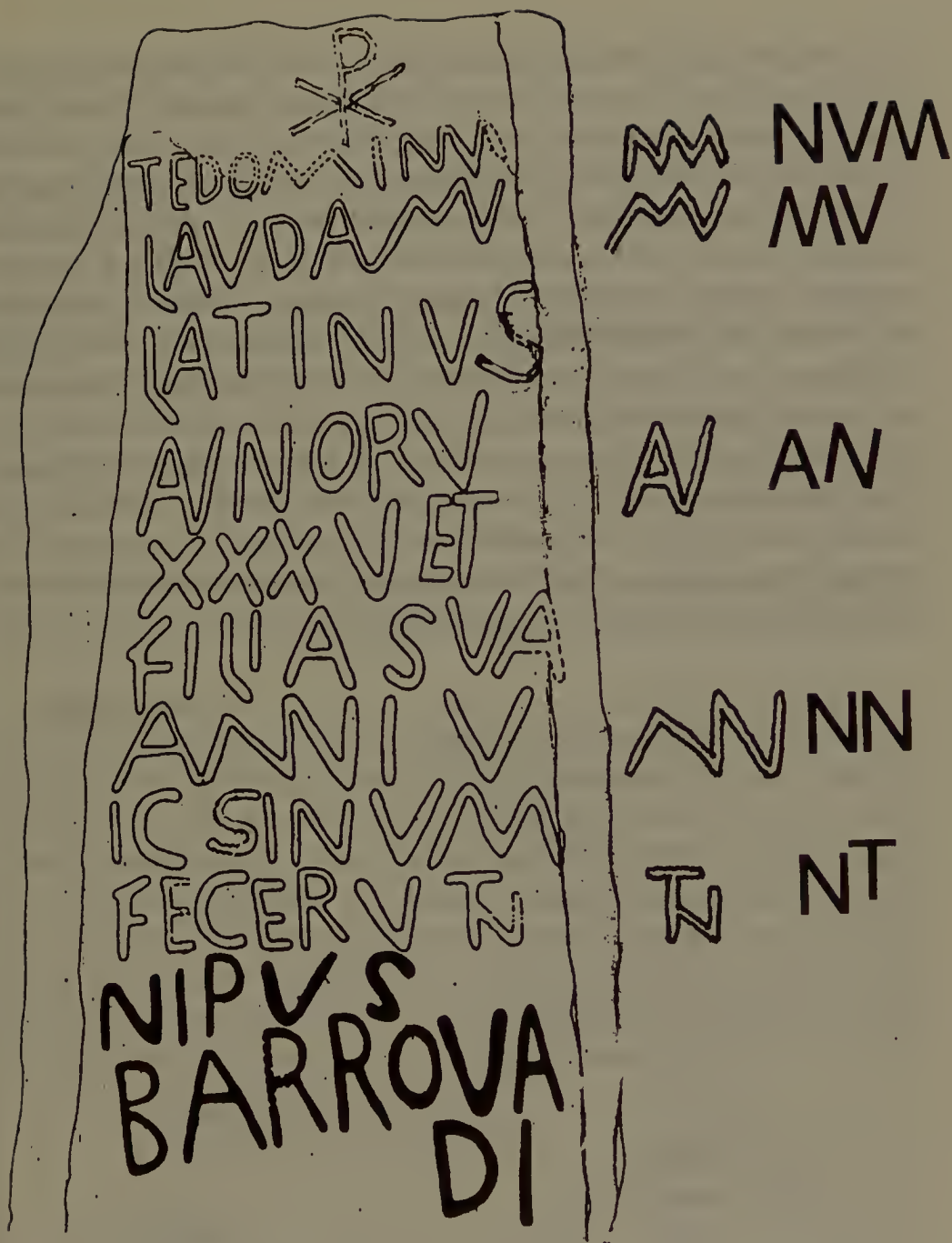


Fig. 1 The Whithorn, 520 *Latinus*, inscription: Dr C.A. Raleigh Radford's drawing (the best), from *TDGNHAS* 34 (1957), 132, with slight *in situ* modifications. The blacked-in NIPVS BARROVADI has been added. On the right the ligatures as shown may count as single letters. The topmost chi-rho monogram, rediscovered by Derek Craig, has been added from various photographs.

Analysis of the text of 520 *Latinus*, as of most comparable Insular texts, must take into account that it has two aspects. There is the *display* – what was cut by a mason at the time and what can be made out, even today – and there is the *model*, or the original composition. A model may be curtailed so that a display can be accommodated on a surface; extreme instances are Roman milestones, where (e.g.) *Marcus Aurelius Probus Pius Felix Invictus Augustus* (7 words, 45 letters) appears as M AVR PROBVS P F INVIC AVG (only 20 letters). The Whithorn stone’s display is slightly shorter than its model, which must be our starting-point. (In transcriptions, / marks division into lines; [M], any letter damaged or eroded but confidently restorable; (m), any letter deliberately omitted in the display but mentally restorable by a reader; and MV, m and u combined, a ligature, two or more letters sharing a cut stroke, as opposed to letters that are conjoined or merely touch.) Here is the transcript of the display in *Fig. 1*.

	(chi-rho)	<u>Letter totals</u>
1	TE DOMIN <u>VM</u>	6
2	LAVDAM <u>V</u> (s)	6
3	LATINVS	7
4	<u>AN</u> NOR V(m)	5
5	XXXV ET	6
6	FILIA SVA	8
7	<u>AN</u> NI V	4
8	IC SINVM	7
9	FECER <u>VT</u>	7
		56
10	NIPVS	5
11	BARROVA	7
12	DI	2
		14

Three further things must be noted. Lines 10 to 12, with *nipus Barrovadi* “a grandson, or descendant, of Barrovadus” (referring to *Latinus*) form no part of the model, as Macalister alone previously

saw; they may have been added a week, a month or a year later, but they form an addition. Second, in counting *letters* in a display, but not *syllables*, ligatures form units; they count as one letter. Third, whoever added NIPVS BARROVADI understood the *computus*, the model's arithmetical basis, because this appendix (14 letters) is one-fourth the length of the display text (56 letters).

What we have is: *Te, Dominum, laudamus. Latinus, annorum XXXV (= triginta quinque), et filia sua, annorum IV (= quatuor), ic sinum fecerunt. (Nipus Barrovadi)* "Thee, Lord, we praise. Latinus, of 35 years, and his daughter, of 4 years, here made a *sinus*. ([He was] a descendant of Barrovadus.)" I spend no time nor space on the previous interpretations, by Radford, Macalister, the Collingwoods or anybody else⁷, because all are wrong, all are based on an *a priori* assumption that this is a memorial to Latinus and his un-named child, and all distort the clear sense of a text composed in a standard, post-Classical Latin.

There is no hint whatsoever that anyone has died, or has been buried. *Fecerunt (facere)* means "they built", the plural subject being specified, and the object being *sinus*, in a post-Classical sense of "refuge, place of safekeeping, designated receptacle". Combined with the surmounting chi-rho, I believe we must see this as yet another term for "a Christian *refugium*, a building, a church" at a phase when no fixed vocabulary of Christian structures had emerged around sub-Roman Britain and Ireland.⁸ The precedents for 520 *Latinus* as a building-stone lie, plentifully, in 3rd-4th century Roman Britain. When we omit the specified ages (35, 4) and divide the text thus:

1	TE DOMINUM LAUDAMUS	invocation
2	LATINUS ET FILIA SUA	agents, subject
3	IC	<i>hic</i> (adverbial)
4	SINUM	object
5	FECERUNT	<i>facere</i> (perf. ind.)

⁷ These are given in my "Whithorn's Christian Beginnings" (n.2 above).

⁸ Cf. discussion of the point in my *Christianity in Roman Britain to AD 500* (1981), 147-9; at this date, *ecclesia* would have been far more likely to mean "a Christian flock" than an actual building.

it is essentially the same as a building-stone of the early 3rd century from Roman York:⁹

1	DEO SANCTO SERAPI	invocation
2	TEMPLUM	object
3	A SOLO	quasi-adverbial
4	FECIT	<i>facere</i> (perf. ind.)
5	CL(audius) HIERONYMIANUS	agent, subject
6	LEG(atus) LEG(ionis) V I VIC	qualifies subject

In proposing a date of (conservatively) 420 x 450 for this inscription I am suggesting that the correct Latin, horizontally-set *capitalis*, use of the first form of chi-rho and the continuation of the older secular formulaic – widespread throughout the north of *Britannia* – make it most unlikely that this could be any later than the middle of the 5th century.

Before continuing the analysis in a different way, we take into account that about a tenth of the 250-odd Insular Latin stone-cut inscriptions spread over western Britain (in Cornwall and Devon) Wales, the Isle of Man, and southern Scotland), mostly dated from the 5th to 8th centuries, can now be shown¹⁰ to have been composed in a particular mode, exhibited in longer literary texts like St. Patrick’s 5th century *Confessio*, that its discoverer and exponent Dr David Howlett has called, and defined as, “Biblical style”.¹¹ That name is appropriate because, though certain components of the style (notably the numerical or arithmetical adjuncts) are detectable in Greek and Hebrew, and certainly antedate the 5th century AD, in both Britain and Ireland up to

⁹ R.G. Collingwood & R.P. Wright, *The Roman Inscriptions of Britain*, , *Inscriptions on Stone* (Oxford, 1950), no. 658; (*templum*) *a solo* “from the ground (upwards)” is formulaic, implying a total benefaction.

¹⁰ Cf. my “The Llanddewi-brefi ‘Idnert’ Stone”, *Peritia*, 10 (Brepols, Turnhout, 1996), 136-183, which explains much of the *arithmetic*.

¹¹ See his *The Book of Letters of Saint Patrick the Bishop* (1994), *The Celtic Latin Tradition of Biblical Style* (1995), and *British Books in Biblical Style* (1997: all, Dublin).

the medieval period the prime model was the late 4th-century *editio Vulgata* or Vulgate, the Latin Bible retranslated or edited by St Jerome, Rufinus the Syrian and others in Jerome's circle. That is true here, of 520 *Latinus*. The date at which parts, rather than (immediately) all, of the Vulgate began to circulate in post-400 Britain remains conjectural¹² but I see no reason at all why the relevant Old Testament book could not have been available at Whithorn by "*circa* 420" (hence my estimate, above). The mathematical adjunct concerning us now is *letters-as-numbers*, or LaN. In this convention, the Latin alphabet was taken to contain 20 letters, each with a successive value for arithmetical purposes:

A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	L
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
M	N	O	P	Q	R	S	T	V	X
11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20

This does not mean that K, Y, and Z were unknown – they are common enough throughout the Vulgate, mostly in proper names or in nouns of Greek origin – but, for Insular Latin inscriptions, 20-letter LaN remained the norm until a 23-letter basis (with K, Y, Z added) took over, apparently during the later 9th century. It must be stressed that this is a convention. Bede, who certainly knew this (and all the *arithmetica* employed in Biblical-style composition), used the longer ABC himself; when he wrote of Whithorn's premier figure as *Nynia episcopo*¹³ he chose, for an unknown reason, to spell the name as *Nynia* (abl.; implying *Nynia*, nom.) but had this been written down at 5th-century Whithorn it would have been as *Ninia*, NINIA, not even necessarily then latinised as **Niniaus*.

¹² One of the very few discussions, by R.P.C. Hanson in his *Saint Patrick. His Origins and Career* (Oxford, 1968), at 182-4, assumes a longer period for the transmission of any of the Vulgate to post-400 Britain than I would regard as likely; Hanson underestimated the apparent ease of British and Irish contact with Gaul, and beyond.

¹³ Bede, *H.E.* III.iv. It cannot be stressed too often that this remains the earliest reference (c. 730) to both *Nynia* and *Candida Casa*.

The use of LaN with A = 1, to X = 20, accompanied the other Roman convention of *letters-as-numerals* (LNU), with M D C L X V I having everyday numerical values. In that respect an inscriptional “X X X V” may count as four *letters*, but is at the same time to be counted as two *words* (*triginta quinque*) and as five *syllables* (with tri.gint.a.quinqu.e; syllables are to be divided etymologically). Armed with all these devices we return to the full, model, text.

			<u>W(ords)</u>	<u>S(yll.)</u>	<u>L(eters)</u>
(a)	1	TE DOMINUM	2	4	9
	2	LAUDAMUS	1	3	8
			3	7	17
(b)	3	LATINUS	1	3	7
	4	ANNORUM	1	3	7
	5	TRIGINTA	3	5	17
		QUINQUE ET			
	6	FILIA SUA	2	5	8
	7	ANNORUM	2	6	14
		QUATUOR			
	8	IC SINUM	2	3	7
	9	FECERUNT	1	3	8
			12	28	68
		Overall:	15	35	85

Observe that in line 5 a potential (written) syllable is lost by elision in *quinque-et* (it would be barbaric not to do so!); that the full model text has 85 letters, while the display had only 56, and retention in the model of XXXV and IV would give 69, not 85; and that (a), lines 1-2, and (b), the rest, are the *semantic* divisions. Each in an independent verbal sentence, with a plural verb having the same subjects (*Latinus, filia*).

It is at this point, in most such analyses, that it becomes clear beyond all rational doubt that the *composer* (the man or woman who created the model text) worked in Biblical style. Structure, order and number, those Divine attributes manifest throughout all God’s Creation, have been introduced to govern what might otherwise be an

arbitrary string of words, names and numerals. The first clue lay in the final, appended, two words:

(Lines 1 to 9) : NIPVS BARROVADI = 56 : 14 (letters) = 1 : 4

and we now observe

(a) lines 1-2 : (b), the rest = 3 : 12 (words) = 1 : 4
 = 7 : 28 (syllables) = 1 : 4
 = 17 : 68 (letters) = 1 : 4

The whole composition is in 1 to 4 proportions, quadruple ratio. Can this element of “four-ness” be detected, at once and in any other guise, simply by looking at the display, what was cut on the stone? Yes, in several ways; this example will suffice. In (a), TE DOMINVM / LAVDAMV(s) might be perceived as if it were / t e d o m I n V m l a V d a m V s /, with a single I (*unus*, “one”) and three V’s (*quinque*, “five”); 1 + 15 = 16 = the *square* of *four*. That trick occurs on at least half-a-dozen other inscriptions. We might observe that in lines 3 to 9 of the *display* (not the model) there can be seen

/latinVs/annorV/xxxVet/filiasVa/anniV/icsinVm/fecerVnt/

with seven occurrences of V (=5), repeating the “35” of the text. If we then take the six I’s (=6) and the three X’s (=30) we have 36, which appropriately is *four*, times the *square* (of 3).

So far, then, over and above the clear and intelligible message of this inscription which records that two people built a *sinus*, its composer has signalled by devices detectable in both the display and the rapidly-restorable model the importance of: quadruple ratio throughout, the number 35, and the number 4, not so much as “four”, but as the basic symbol for all and any squares. A suspicion may arise that “Latinus” was not necessarily aged 35 at the time, and that his little daughter – who, most unusually, remains un-named¹⁴ – was not necessarily aged 4. This is not to imply that either was a fiction; the gratuitous appendix telling us that Latinus was in effect “the Latinus

¹⁴ Cf. (alone) 402, N.Wales, 6th cent., MVLIER BONA NOBILI, supposing her to be “a good wife of N” rather than “Bona, wife of N.”.

who happened to be a descendant of Barrovadus” must rule that out, even if its social significance escapes us.¹⁵

When we deploy LaN, the adding-up of individual letters, more of the same suite of signals comes to light. It is no accident that F I L I A, as 6.9.10.9.1, adds up to 35; or that the first and last letters in (a), T edominumlaudamu S, T S, 18.17, also make 35; or that in the display, the initial letters of the first nine lines as T L L A X F A I F, 18.10.10.1 20.6.1.9.6, make 81, which is a *square* of a *square*, and the first and last letters overall (T T, 18.18) give 36, *four* times the *square* of 3. Bearing in mind that it is easy to acquire the knack of “adding” long strings of letters quickly, we find that in the model text the initials of all fifteen words add up to 162 (twice 81 again) and that, retaining the as-cut “XXXV”, TE DOMINUM LAUDAMUS LATINUS ANNORUM XXXV has (of course) 35 letters.

What was the point of this, the repetitions of 1 to 4, of 35, of squares all over the place? Given that 520 *Latimus* must be seen as a building-stone there could be an idea the proportional formula applied to a real building, breadth : length as 1:4 – unduly elongated for anything in the Romano-British tradition, where the commonest module in ground plans was probably 1:2, the double square.

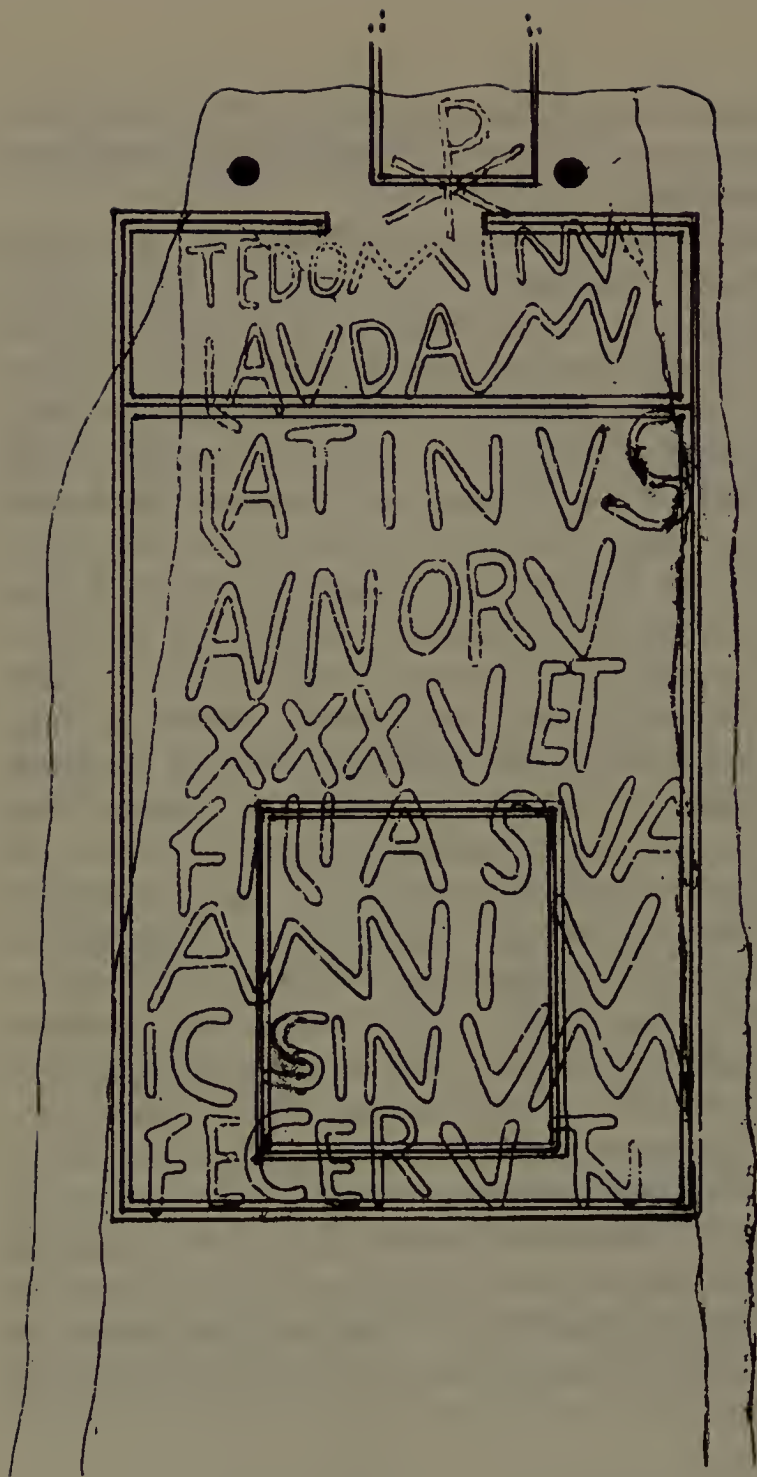
Nevertheless, that idea points in the right general direction. The composer based the text, and its computus, upon a descriptive account of the building of the greatest of all Houses of God; the Temple of Solomon, in David’s city of Jerusalem. The word *templum*, with its pre-400 pagan associations, was mostly avoided. This is the *Domini domus*, the House of the Lord, and the shared letters in the opening /te DOMINum lauDaMUS/ proclaim as much. It matters nothing whether this vast Late Bronze Age edifice was actually constructed, or what were its real dimensions. The blueprint was the description contained in 2 Chronicles, 3 and 4; it is a later and secondary version of the primary, 1 Kings, 6 and 7, account, but it is the one used here. Unless

¹⁵ If (latinised) *Barrovadus* represents Primitive Irish **Barrowedas*, which is at least supportable, he may have been a local and notable immigrant Irish leader of the 4th century; the addition (by some relative?) forms a very slight argument for Latinus having died.

Jerome's (or Rufinus's) text reproduced exactly that of a lost British *vetus Latina* 2 Chronicles (unlikely!), it was the Vulgate version, word for word, that is involved.

The composer took the longer axis of the Temple as east-west, the front and main entrance facing east. A close reading of 1 Kings offers a main structure (*domus*) 60 cubits long and 20 wide, with a front portion (*porticus*) 10 cubits long and 20 wide; overall, 20 by 70 cubits, ratio of 2:7 or 1:3.5. In 2 Chronicles 3, 3-4 onward, the *maior domus* is 60 by 20; the length of the *porticus* is said to "according to the breadth of the House", i.e. also 20 cubits, its N-S breadth (*latitudo*) not being stated. On any reading, this allows 20 by 80 cubits overall. That is the inscription's 1 to 4 ratio. Outside the east front, which may have been much higher than the back (west) end, and pylon-like, copying an Egyptian temple,¹⁶ stood the two *columnae* named as "Booz" (north; left, *ad levam*) and "Iachin" (south; right, *a dextris*). Sheathed in metal, each was 35 cubits high. That is the repeated "35" of the inscription. Within the main *domus*, at its west end, was the holiest segment of all; the Tabernacle, planned as the permanent home of the Ark, the *sanctum sanctorum*. In 1 Kings its space is a symbolic cube (of 20 cubits); but in 2 Chronicles, 3.8, only the ground plan is mentioned – as *longitudinem cubitorum XX et latitudinem similiter XX cubitorum*. The same 20-by-20 dimensions apply to the *altare aeneum*, a bronze or brass structure (possibly a sacrificial altar, on rock) externally in the eastern forecourt. This, with the added element of "four" as a factor of 20 (cubits), is the repetitive *square* of the inscription. Insofar as we can now be concerned with the archaeology of the inscribed stone, any contemporary *sinus* at Whithorn is likely to have been rectangular, aligned east-west, probably to have had a shorter-end doorway, and conceivably to have incorporated the 520 *Latinus* pillar (narrow, not quite 4 feet high) alone (or, with a blank twin, as one of a pair like

¹⁶ The best reference remains Professor Archibald Kennedy's account with plan and elevation in the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, 11th edn (1911), 604. Kennedy's reconstruction is of a much more complex structure, but containing the basic 2 Chronicles, 3 and 4, elements.



A
CC
P

MD

SS

Fig. 2 The “mental image” display plan of Solomon’s Temple, generated by the text and here superimposed on the wording. Components are indicated, right: A, external altar; CC, two columns; P, porticus; MD, *maior domus*, SS, *sanctum sanctorum*.

Booz and Iachin), in or against an outer wall. That may be put aside for the moment.

When I saw this Biblical interpretation of the 15-word text (in February 1997) I realised that, with so radical a departure from what these crude-looking British *inscriptiones Christianae* are supposed to represent and with such *outré* a suggestion of a Vulgate model, even my most nimble-witted fellow workers in the field would find it hard to accept. The fact that elements of the 520 *Latinus* computus were already, demonstrably, known from other Insular stones had not then been published. Providentially, during a first search among contemporary inscribed memorials in the Rhineland (where there are certainly further examples of the style), and then in Iberia, I came across a 6th-century combined memorial and building-stone from Vilde, near Burgos (here, Vives 505 *Anduires*¹⁷), 14 horizontal lines of capitals with some ligatures and abbreviations, in *thirty-five* words; including ANNOS XXXV, and QUATER (*annos* being word no.20). Despite damage at one corner and marginal erosion, the text can be fully restored (my reading slightly modifies that of Vives). I give a transcript of the model (not the display), in which three potential written syllables must be lost by synizesis of unstressed vowels, and a redundant *et* that crept into the cut display must be omitted. The text falls readily into five segments. Unlike 520 *Latinus*, the tall slab is both a memorial at the grave (*locus*) of the noblewoman Anduires and an *ex post facto* building-stone for the *eclesia* that she and her husband *fecerunt*.

	<u>W</u>	<u>S</u>	<u>L</u>
(a) (?+) IN NOMINE DOMINI LOCUS ANDUIRES INLUSTRIS FEMINAE	7	18	44
(b) QUI HANC ECLESIAM CUM VIRO SUO ANDUIRO INLUSTRE HOMINE FECERUNT	10	23	54
(c) FUERUNT PARTICIPES ANNOS XXXV QUATER NUTRIERANT FILIOS	7	22	39

¹⁷ D.J. Vives, *Inscripciones Cristianas de la España Romana y Visigoda* (Barcelona, 1942), 168-9, illus.lám XIII; one can accept most of his restoration but some obvious letters were overlooked.

(d)	(et) RECESSIT SUPRADICTA MATRONA IN PACE	5	13	31
(e)	ET IN SUMMA CASTITATE CUM CERTITUDINE	6	14	32
		28	72	176
	Overall:	35	90	220

(“ + In the name of the Lord! The grave of Anduies, a noblewoman, who built this church with her husband Anduirus, a nobleman. They were partners [in marriage] 35 years, and four times they reared children. The above-named lady has departed [this life] in peace; and in the highest steadfast faith, with an assuredness [of her resurrection].”)

The proportions within the text are:

(a) : (b) to (e)	Words	7 : 28	=	1 : 4
	Syllables	18 : 72	=	1 : 4
	Letters	44 : 176	=	1 : 4

When we add to this the 35 words, the claim of 35 years of married bliss, the alleged *four* children, the combined total of words (35) and syllables (90) as 125 (which holds in 1:4 ratio 5×5 -squared), *and* the match between *Domini domus* and DOMINI IOCUS, it is obvious that Vives 505 *Anduies* – wholly unconnected with 520 *Latimus*, nine hundred miles away and a good century later – is based on the same passage of the Vulgate. The two authenticate each other. Nor has it yet been ascertained that, in the much larger corpus of Gaulish inscriptions, there may not be others in the same mould.

While typing, shortly before its delivery, the text of this first John Jamieson Lecture it occurred to me that I had never measured the space occupied by lines 1 to 9 of the inscription, simply to see if the approximate rectangle was itself of 1:4 proportions (in fact, it is more or less 1:2, probably immaterial). Doing this, suddenly I saw – that verb is used advisedly, because it is what the composer intended – that, wholly apart from the computus and the Vulgate interpretation, the arrangement of the words and letters forms a *picture*. It is a ground plan of the Temple of Solomon, the outlines of which can be mentally superimposed on the display (as in *Fig.2*). The “mental image” thus generated is elaborately labelled, as to the parts, dimensions and

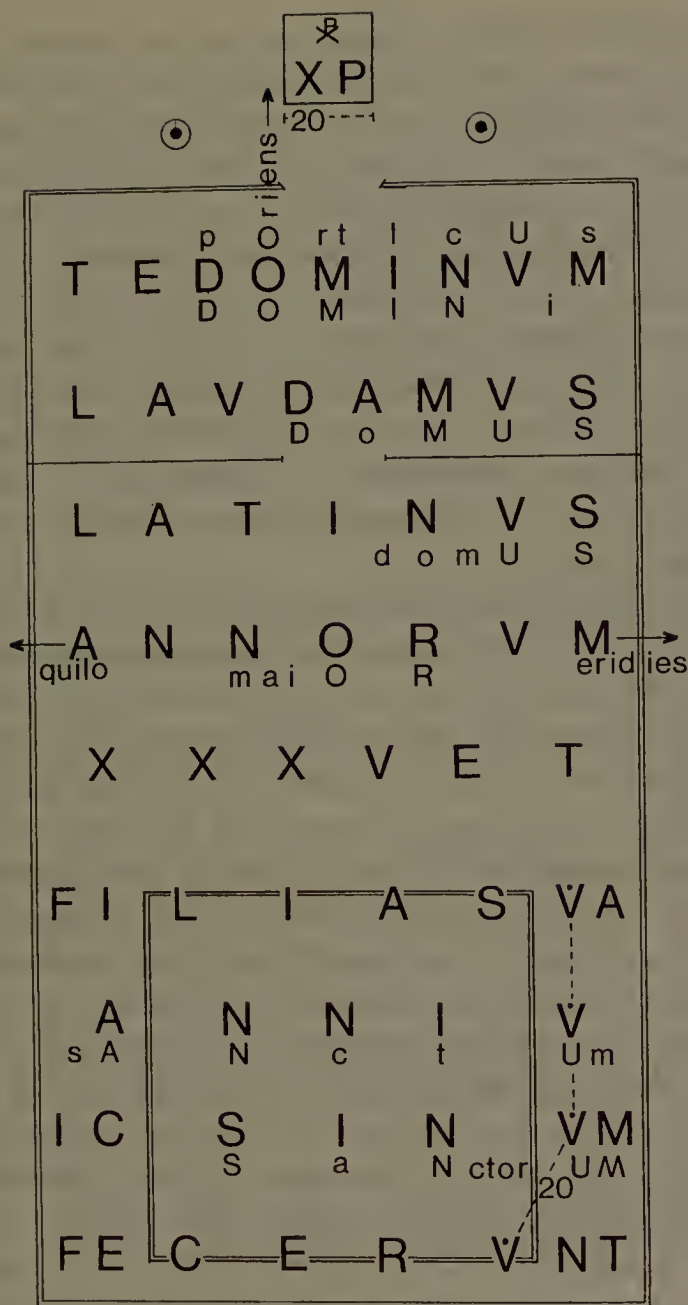


Fig. 3 How the display plan of Solomon's Temple was labelled: part-words from the text fall in the right places. Three compass-points, "Oriens", "Aquila", "Meridies" (E,N,S), are given. For the lower inner square, the *sanctum sanctorum* or Tabernacle, the four dotted V's, right, denote the 20 cubits. The square is reinforced by corner letters **L S C V** = 49, square of 7, and internal **N N N** = 36, square of 6. Above, the external altar (the chi-rho) is 20 cubits square (**X** = **LaN**, 20) and 10 cubits high (**X** = **LNu**, 10).

orientation of the Temple's literary description, through the use of initials, single letters, letters-as-numerals, parts of words and part-anagrams. Since that first revelation (March 1997) a further ten or so "mental images", either in the shape of *plans* or (in Wales, after 500) as sideways views, *profiles* involving human figures, have come to light. It would be inappropriate and far too space-demanding to include further discussion of this phenomenon, an interim summary account of which has been privately published.¹⁸ The 520 *Latinus* remains both the earliest in the British corpus and, in respect of its labelling, the richest, and what follows will serve to introduce something for which the usual adjectives ("remarkable", "extraordinary", "startling" and "unprecedented") could be regarded as meiotic. Readers can follow the details on *Figs.3* and *4*.

The chi-rho at the head of the inscription, for once entirely (Greek) CH-R (I S T O S), is Christ; in the New Testament, to whose combined Gospels both the *four* (IV, quatuor) and the *square* of the computus allude. In the 2 Chronicles light, the chi-rho marks the external *altare*, 20 by 20 cubits; the "X" as 20 (LaN) denotes that, and "X" as 10 (LNu) its height of *ten* cubits (2 Chron., 4.1). But He cannot be shown in the physical context of a Temple built so long before the New Testament story, in which Christ's earthly life of 33 years fulfilled the 33 years of David's reign in the (Late Bronze Age) Jerusalem; 1 Kings, 2.11. We turn to Apocalypse, the Book of Revelation, at 1.12-13 and 2.1 ("... I saw seven golden candlesticks" (*candelabra*) "and in the midst of the seven candlesticks One like unto the Son of Man"; "... These things saith he, that holdeth the seven stars in his right hand, Who walketh in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks". Both Vulgate passages (by Rufinus rather than Jerome) exhibit an *arithmetica* based on "7"; "in the midst" is *in medio* and, enigmatically, in the first passage *medio* is word no.18, in the second, word no. 17 ($18 + 17 = 35$). In the mental-image plan, the placing of

¹⁸ *Mental Images, from Latin Inscriptions in post-Roman Western Britain* (Truro, August 1997); this defines display and devised plans and profiles, suggesting that plans were inherited from a Romano-British background recently identified, but profiles were invented in north Wales around 500.

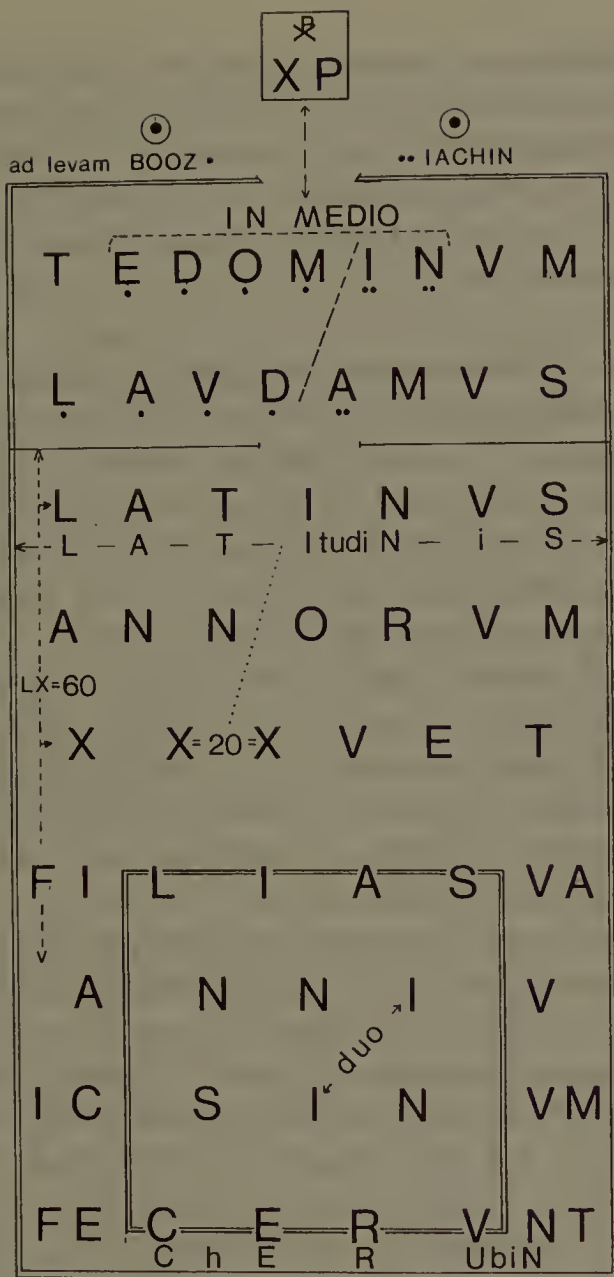


Fig.4 The labelling is expanded. The two 35-cubits high columns “Booz” and “Iachin” are matched by single- and double-dotted letters; “35” is given by T S, $17.18 = 35$, and line 6, F I (15) and V A (20). Top, the chi-rho now as Christ, and line 1 with the entrance, are given by the IN MEDIO anagram; letters E D O M = 33 and O M I = 33. In line 3, the breadth of 20 cubits goes with the X X in line 5. On the left, L and X mark the length (60 cubits) of the *maior domus*. Within the square, I I = duo (Cherubin) are named in line 9. In all, 50 of the 65 letters shown seem to have been used, some of them more than once.

Christ, as the chi-rho, is echoed by line no.1 (look closely again at *Fig.1*). It has nine letters (T E D O M I N U M); the central, wide, “M” is the main doorway into the Temple; within t) E D O M I N (u m, we find anagrams of both *in* and *medio*. (This is also true for Vives 505 *Anduies*; line 1, I n n o) M I N E D O (m i n I, same six letters, with the added point that the first and last I’s must represent the *duae columnae*.)

Lines 1 and 2 are the *porticus*. Note that d O m I n U m and p O r t I c U s have matching vowels. For the two 35-cubit-high columns, T of TE and the last -S in LAUDAMUS (model) = 35; top right, domi)NUM, and bottom left, LA(udamus), are in co)LUMNA(e), the *right* half of lines 1 and 2 holds the I A N of *Iachin*, and the *left* half, the O of *Booz* and the L E V A of *ad levam*. To the composer, the top, or front, was the *east*; *Oriens*, with O I E N in line 1.

Lines 3 to 5 (display) are the *maior domus*, Hebrew *hekal*, the main body of the Temple. The “L” of LATINVS is the reference-peg for both the E-W width or breadth (in 3.3, LATItUdiNiS) and the N-S *longitudo*. The latter, 60 cubits, is the initials L and X of lines 3 and 5; the former, the other X X in line 5. Initial A in line 4 points, correctly, towards *A*(*quilo*), the *north* side.

Lines 6 to 9 (*four* of them) contain the square Holy of Holies, the *Sanctum Sanctorum* (line 7, s) A N (ct) V (m); 8, ic) S (a) N (ctor) V M). The top, 6, and bottom, 9, alone have (model) *eight* letters. The internal square is marked by (line 6) L and S, (line 9) C and V; L S C V, 10.17.3.19 = 49, *square* of 7. The four right-margin letters (in the model again), A U M T, also make 49. The cubit-length of the square, 20, is given by V V V V (in sVa / iV / nVm / Vtn). Two vast gold-covered Cherubin spanned the Ark. They are at the base, in line 9; model, fe C E R U N t = C h E R U b i N. On the right of line 8, the final -M is of course for *M(eridies)*, and indicates the *south*. Readers may wish, the Vulgate text of 2 Chronicles at the ready, to try their hands; I very much doubt if the above has exhausted the possible allusions.

To find this anywhere in the early medieval West constitutes an eye-opener. To find out, just beyond the limits of the late Empire in early 5th-century Galloway – and, of all places, at *Whithorn* – is to re-open the whole matter of “Ninian”, *Candida Casa*, the late W. Douglas Simpson’s Apostle of Scotland at the Cradle of the Kirk, and a debate concerning Scottish Christian origins that seemed to have run its course, run out of steam, and could only hope to be revived through publication of the recent Whithorn excavations or the chance discovery of some entirely fresh evidence. Both desiderata have now been met. What does 520 *Latinus* imply, and who was *Latinus*? I anticipate conclusions in stating that I now have no doubts that the *sinus* to which the inscription refers was, essentially, the *ecclesiam de lapide, insolito Brettonibus more* to which Bede first made reference three centuries later; it was the church that “Nynia”, that most revered and holy bishop, a man of the nation of the Britons, *fecerit*; but at this time (within 420 x 450?) it was neither known as *Candida Casa* in Latin or an equivalent in any other language, nor was it under the patronage of Martin of Tours, nor was it monastic. How, when and whence it acquired these features are questions that the Kirkmadrine inscriptions may be able to answer. My last point is tentative in the extreme. The currency of a (British?) name close to Bede’s written *Nynia* is probably attested separately by the medieval-to-modern misreadings of **Niniauus* and “Ninianus”, *Ninian*, and the muddled and late Irish reference to *Moninn* (? *mo* + *Ninn*), *Findia* (= ?Finnian) and *Futerna* (Whithorn).¹⁹ I see no obvious connection with the Welsh, 9th-century, *Nenni* and the late 6th or 7th-century Welsh inscription (339) with (?)NEMNII, surely another name. *Latinus* continues a pre-400 cognomen. *Latininus* (extended) is a possible bye-form, a “pet” or family name. Dare one think that **Ninia* began as a hypocoristic from *Latinus*, **Latininus*, and ousted its source?

¹⁹ W. Stokes, *The Martyrology of Oengus the Culdee* (Henry Bradshaw Society, 1905), 208-9, 212-3. The best discussion is P.A. Wilson’s “St Ninian and Candida Casa: Literary Evidence from Ireland”, *Trans. Dumfries & Galloway NHAS*, 41 (1964), 156-85, continued as “St Ninian: Irish Evidence Further Examined”, *ibid.*, 46 (1969), 140-159.

The Kirkmadrine inscriptions

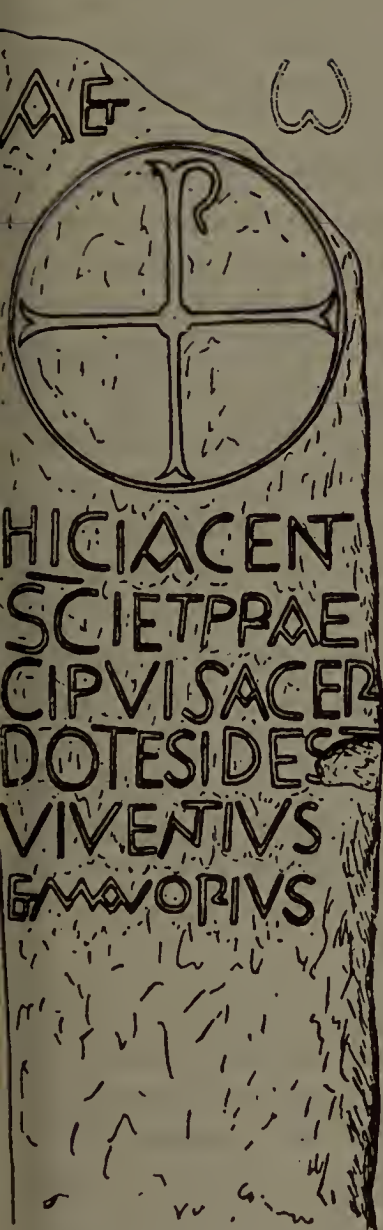
Housed in the porch of the ruined church at Kirkmadrine, parish of Stoneykirk in the Rinns peninsula (see map, *Fig. 6*), are three inscribed stones; 516 *Viventius*, 517 *Florentius* and 518 (*Initium et Finis*). A fourth, related, stone, “a wasted ... flag of slaty stone”, long lost, was found before 1820 associated with a grave at Low Curchie, some 7 miles (12 km) southwards; a reliable record indicates that it exhibited the name *Ventidius*, and the information that he was a subdeacon (?*subdiaconus*).²⁰ The Kirkmadrine stones have a tangled history – 518 was lost for a time, but fortunately rediscovered in a gate-pillar – and Sir Herbert Maxwell’s account²¹ supplies all the information. There is no doubt that the cluster belongs to Kirkmadrine, even if (archaeologically) no trace of any contemporary ecclesiastical site has ever been found there.

The surviving stones and their inscriptions possess common characteristics that mark them off from 520 *Latinus* and indeed from most other Insular inscriptions of the period (which, it will be argued, is the first half of the 6th century) with the exception of two, 391 *Senacus* and 392 *Veracius*, from Capel Anelog in the Llyn peninsula, the “pig’s ear” of NW Wales, with which they share certain features. These characteristics are Gaulish, in the sense that the nearest congeners in space and time are the inscribed memorials of Christian (Atlantic) Gaul south of the Loire. All three stones are horizontally lettered in capitals but with two letter-forms, “angle-bar A” and “sideways R”, that represent Continental fashions imported not before c.500.²² All three texts are surmounted by neatly-ringed chi-rho motifs of the second kind, combining an upright cross with the P or *rho*, the loop of the latter being shown “open” rather like the head of a crook, and the arm-terminals being expanded and forked (see *Fig. 5*). On 516 *Viventius*, the earliest of the three and the only one to repeat the

²⁰ R.C. Reid, “The Ventidius Stone, Kirkmaiden”, *Trans. Dumfries & Galloway NHAS*, 36 (1959), 184-5.

²¹ In *Proc. Soc. Antiq. Scotland*, 51 (1916-17), 199-207, illus.

²² See my *And Shall These Mute Stones Speak? Post Roman Inscriptions in Western Britain* (Cardiff, 1994), 96-9 and (Welsh) map, fig. 7.5.



516



517



518

Fig.5 The three Kirkmadrine stones: R.A.S. Macalister's drawings, reproduced by permission of the Controller, Stationery Office, Dublin, but slightly modified from inspection and photographs. In 516 the now-missing *omega* ("W" shape) may have been more central.

encircled chi-rho, solo, on the reverse,²³ the ring is topped by *alpha* and *omega*, as “A ET W” (the rounded W is now missing). In 516 the word S C I (for *sancti*) is abbreviated by overlining, a device otherwise seen only on 391 *Senacius* and 392 *Veracius*, which have the comparable P R S B and P B R respectively (both for *presbiter*).

As instances of Biblical-style composition, 516 *Viventius* in particular serves to exemplify a greater degree of *arithmetica* in its computus than 520 *Latinus*, and introduces features and devices not so far described. I believe there to be both a common thread and a common message in the texts of 516, 517 and 518, interpretable again through an unexpected (but convenient) Vulgate allusion. What 516 does is to introduce, through a clear, direct and effective computus, items found singly or *in toto* on other (but generally later) Insular stones; key numbers, numerical acrostics from letter squares, the device that I call *triangularisation*, and the use of extreme ratio. If this is a composition by an incoming Gaulish cleric, it is in an idiom that betrays an already fully-established mode. Taken with the preliminary findings from the Middle Rhine and Iberian inscriptions, these Kirkmadrine inferences, if sound, offer yet another reason to imagine that the genesis of “Biblical-style” *arithmetica*, so deployed, was (a) secular, and (b) known and taught across the western, Latin-speaking provinces of the Empire well before the 5th century AD.

516 *Viventius*

Superficially the text is in six lines, with 11 words. However, analysis reveals that the “A ET W” *above* the ringed chi-rho must be treated as line 1 of seven; and that it was verbalised, not as *alpha et omega*, but as /ah-et-oh/ – *three* words, *three* syllables and (because ET is ligatured) *three* letters. Ligatures are again singles, and the abbreviated S C I (= *sancti*) is three letters. Here is a transcript of the display:

		<u>W</u>	<u>S</u>	<u>L</u>
		3	3	3
1	A	<u>ET</u>	W (or O)	

²³ Now inaccessible, but figured in J. Anderson, *Scotland in Early Christian Times*, 2nd ser. (Edinburgh, 1881), 254.

2	HIC IACENT	2	3	8
3	SCI ET PRAE		4	9
4	CIPVI SACER	6	5	10
5	DOTES ID EST		4	10
6	VIVENTIVS	1	4	8
7	ET MAVORIVS	2	5	8
		14	28	56

In full, it reads: *A et O. Hic iacent sancti et praecipui sacerdotes, id est Viventius et Mavorius*, “Alpha and Omega. Here lie the holy and excellent bishops, that is, Viventius and Mavorius” (without prejudice to the exact sense of *sacerdos*; see below).

The immediate signal is to offer two *key numbers*; these are numbers, normally lower than 20, that recur so often throughout a computus that a reader will assume them to possess a symbolic or allusive meaning. Here, they are *seven* and *nineteen*. The display has 7 lines. All three totals are multiples of 7, and their sum (= 98) is twice the square of 7. The initial letters of the lines, A H S C D V E, 1.8.17.3.4.19.5, make 57, or 19 times three. Noting that initial V(*iventius*) = 19, the letters of the names as *Viventius et Mavorius* amount to 19. Lastly, taking C, V and I as numerals, this display shows five C’s (500), six V’s (30) and nine I’s (9); and 539 = 7 times 77, or the square of 7, times eleven.

The model text has two semantic parts, as under:

		<u>W</u>	<u>S</u>
(a)	A ET O HIC IACENT SANCTI ET PRAECIPUI SACERDOTES	9	17
(b)	ID EST VIVENTIUS ET MAVORIUS	5	11
		14	28

– because (a) can stand as an independent verbal sentence. In 520 *Latinus*, and Vives 505 *Anduies*, we saw how each text had been proportioned between a lesser and a greater part in 1:4, *quadruple*, ratio. Here (b), the lesser part, and (a) the greater, are in *extreme* ratio (the “Golden Mean”, *sectio divina*, etc.) of 1:1.618. These ideal proportions, having a much earlier history of their own, were for

practical purposes ascertained in the inscriptional computus by reference to what are called “Fibonacci numbers”. In such sets of integers, each is the sum of the two preceding, and those two are in extreme ratio within their sum; the larger the numbers, the closer to the desired 1 to 1.618 (or .382 to .618, which is the same).²⁴ A dozen or so sets would have been memorised. Conventionally, we write 5:9 → 14 to mean “5 and 9 are in extreme ratio, within 14”, and the division-point is the extreme section. Here, the words are as 5:9 → 14, from the set 1.4.5.9.14.23.37.60..., and the syllables 11:17 → 28, from the set 1.5.6.11.17.28.45... There is even a clever side-reference to the two key numbers. The extreme sections coincide at *sacerdote* S/I *d*; the flanking S and I, 17 and 9, make 26; and that is also the sum of key numbers *seven* and *nineteen*.

Still with the text as (a) and (b), we can examine the letters. Those of (b) total 24, those of (a) 40. Their sum is 64. This gives a third instance of extreme ratio, when the totals are divided by 8; because 24:40 → 64 becomes 3:5 → 8, which is the commonest expression of extreme ratio provided by the first (or “natural”²⁵) number set, 1.2.3.5.8.13.21.34.55.89.144... And, setting out the letters in another fashion as

AETOH I C IACENT S ANCTIE T PRAECI P UISACE R
DOTESI D ESTVIV E NTIUSE T MAVORI U (S

every *seventh* letter adds up to 112, which is (key number) 7, times 16; and every *nineteenth* letter (I T M) to 38, which is (key number) 19, times 2.

Analysis of the model (as opposed to displayed) text takes a new guise, because expansion does not alter the first and last letters of any

²⁴ A full account of extreme ratio, its history and use and the many curious properties of the Fibonacci numbers would double the length of this paper; the constant known as $\phi = 1.6180339...$ is generated from Euclidean geometry, as $\frac{1}{2}(1 + \sqrt{5})$, and $1/\phi = \phi - 1$. For the use in Biblical style, see (summarily) Howlett’s introductory chapters within the works cited under n.11 above.

²⁵ Natural, because it has been found manifested in (e.g.) arrangements of scales on pineapples, petals on certain flowers, etc.; for this see *passim* within D.W. Thompson, *Growth and Form*, 2nd edn, 2 vols. (Cambridge, 1942).

words; the new feature is that the letter total rises to 64. This (as elsewhere) constitutes inviting the reader to set out a letter square:

1	A E T O H I C I	9	(= 66)
1	A C E N T S A N	12	
3	C T I E T P R A	1	
5	E C I P U I S A	1	
3	C E R D O T E S	17	
9	I D E S T V I V	19	
5	E N T I U S E T	18	
11	M A V O R I U S	17	(= 105)
38		94	

Verbally, there are no acrostics, diagonals, or a telestich (the right column) here; a computistic letter square uses LaN values to signal totals. The emphasis moves to key number *nineteen*. In the bottom line, MAVORIUS adds to 105, or 7 times 15. The left column gives 38, twice 19. The corner letters A I M S, 1.9.11.17, also add up to 38. The combined total of the top and bottom lines, as 171, is 19, times nine.

Tricks, letter- and number-games, devices – whatever one calls them – like this were the mainstay of inscriptional computus. They are quite easy to construct because of the flexibility of Latin, and easily resolved by anyone practised in mental arithmetic who knows the LaN values by heart (we must assume that the efficient Roman system of finger- and knuckle-counting was universally used).²⁶ As well as letter squares, there was a common exploitation of the *triangulars*. A triangular number from an integer, N (written as ΔN), is the sum of all integers from 1 to N inclusive; thus, 1 + 2 + 3 + 4 + 5 + 6 = 15, which is Δ6. The formula is very simple; ΔN = ½ (N²) plus ½ (N), so ½ x

²⁶ An accessible account (fully referenced) is given in K. Menninger, *Zahlwort und Ziffer* (Göttingen, 1957-58), translated by Paul Broneer as *Number Words and Number Symbols. A Cultural History of Numbers* (Dover, N.Y., 1992), at 199-220. *Computus (flexus) digitorum*, familiar to Bede, must have been universally taught and practised throughout the West in Roman and later times; see Bede's vital account in the introduction to his *De temporum ratione*.

144 (=72) plus ½ x 12 (=6) gives 78, which is Δ12. Triangulars up to at least 210, or Δ20, would have been known by heart. Any letter square is, inherently, the repository of two triangulars, because $N^2 = \Delta(N) + \Delta(N-1)$; thus, here, the 64 (letters) must constitute 36, as Δ8, plus 28, as Δ7.

Setting out inscriptional letter-runs in triangular form (or *triangularisation*), either as a pyramid or as an inverted triangle, offers a fresh set of potentially-meaningful LaN totals by adding up letters on the diagonals, the straight top or bottom line and the three apicals (the angle letters). It happens that the little sum of 64 = 36 + 28 is repeated by the two names. V *iventiu* S gives V S, 19.17 = 36, and M *avoriu* S, M S, 11.17 = 28. In fact it is the first sum, alone, that readers are expected to triangularise.

(Pyramid)				(Inverted)			
1	A	1	1	A E T O H I C I	9*		
5	E T	18	1	A C E N T S A	1		
13	O H I	9	12	N C T I E T	18		
3	C I A C	3	14	P R A E C	3		
5	E N T S A	1	9	I P U I	9		
12	N C T I E T	18	17	S A C	3		
14	P R A E C I P	14	5	E R	16		
19*	U I S A C E R D	4	4	D	4		
72		68	63				63
*(=74)				** (=66)			

This device, generated by the model text's offer of a letter square with 64 = 36 + 28, would have been the last that a reader might be expected to resolve. It concentrates wholly upon *seven*, probably implying that this is the more important key number. In the pyramid, the sum of both sides 72 + 68 = 140, 7 times 20. In the *inverted* triangle, each side is 63, or 7 times 9. The apicals A I D, 1.9.4, give 14, or twice 7. The bottom line of the pyramid with 74, and the top of the inverted triangle with 66, make 140, or 7 times twenty again. If one wants to go on, the *seventh* line of the inverted is E R, 5.16 = 21, thrice

7, and of the pyramid's, the first and last letters of P (RAECI) P, 14.14 = 28, 7 times four.

With relief, we turn to an interpretation of a text whose rich computus has now produced 19 at least eight times, and 7 at least fifteen times. What do they signify? The first has no allusive Biblical value. It functions here to affirm the presentation of VIVENTIUS ET MAVORIUS in 19 letters, starting with V = 19. *Seven*, on the other hand, is so regularly presented that it must constitute a dominant theme and not just a computistic key number.

The answer that I would propose, having rejected many others less well supported by additional evidence or likely inferences, is that 516 is a memorial for two named men, the first to die out of an original band of seven; and that the latter figure held a very special importance (perhaps, understandably, a sentimental one) for the survivors, one of whom composed this epitaph. Specifically one has in mind a group of seven clerics, probably within a larger *familia*, arriving from Gaul and settling in the Rinns of Galloway. Viventius and Mavorius (516) were *sacerdotes*; best rendered as “of episcopal rank, consecrated as bishops” but without any connotation of bishopric within a sub-Roman British territorial or hierarchical structure (for which *episcopus* might have been used).²⁷ On the contemporary Welsh evidence, the husband who commemorated his wife with the early 6th-century 325 (*Aud*)iva inscription – Anglesey – as BIVATISI (gen.), FAMVLVS DI, SACERDOS, ET VASSO PAVLINI was a court *sacerdos* with the Venedotian rulers;²⁸ Bede's *Nynia*, *episcopo*, the head of an actual see centred on 5th-century Whithorn. At Kirkmadrine, inscription 517

²⁷ For *episcopi* (with sees based on some of the *civitas* centres?) in 4th-century Britannia, see my “Christianity in Roman Britain”, 267-8.

²⁸ This very long inscription (sadly misread by Dr Radford, Macalister, Sir Ifor Williams, and V.E. Nash-Williams in *The Early Christian Monuments of Wales* (Cardiff, 1950; his no.33)) has been elucidated by David Howlett, who kindly allows me to include this. It must be removed from the potentially “Gaulish” category at once; husband, *sacerdos* and composer was BIVATISUS, not ‘BIVATIGI(mi)’ - names are never so curtailed; his wife was not ANDOCO GNATIONE (neither of them had anything to do with the *Andecavi* of Gaul, at Angers) but AVDO COGNATIONE; a father, Audus, must suggest a daughter Audiva. These people are native aristocracy in sub-Roman Anglesey.

naming two further men (again omitting parentage and again including a large ringed chi-rho) as Florentius and some such (short) name as Titus, gives us – as numbers three and four of the seven – likely *presbiteri*, ordained priests; the only British stones to use this, 391 *Senacus* and 392 *Veracius* in NW Wales both with abbreviated PRESBITER, are also explicable as memorials of Gaulish incomers. A fifth name is supplied from the (lost) Low Curghie grave-slab of Ventidiys; if that described him as SVBDIACONVS, which seems likely, it is a minor order rarely cited in the whole range of European *inscriptiones Christianae*.²⁹ One further, two-name, stone found at Kirkmadrine would complete such a tally.

Some support is offered by 517 Florentius (*Fig.5*). In line 1, flaking has removed 3 or 4 (no more) letters, a stub for the second suggesting an “I”; TITVS might be preferred to (e.g.) NILVS, and Macalister’s ISTIS (“With them”, i.e. with Viventius and Mavorius) was a wild surmise. Analysis provides:

		<u>W</u>	<u>S</u>	<u>L</u>
1	. I . . S <u>ET</u>	2	3	6?
2	F L O R E N	1	2	6
3	T I V S		2	4
		3	7	16?

It gives a (fairly certain) syllable count of 7. Allowing TITVS, line initials would be T F T, $18.6.18 = 42$, 7 times 6. Expanding ligatured ET, the top line would have 7 letters. (The ten letters of Florentius may be affirmed by W, 3, plus S, 7.) There are, at the least, signs that key number *seven* has been carried over.

The third stone, 518 (also *Fig.5*), is not overtly a memorial; though it could be explained as dedicatory, erected to mark the inauguration of a formal Christian cemetery at Kirkmadrine. Despite estimates of its date as 7th century on epigraphic grounds it is entirely possible to see

²⁹ None in the hundreds from Iberia (Vives); I note two from Trier, a former Imperial centre, 5th-6th cents., BASILIVS SVBDIACONVS and VRSINIANO SVBDIACONO (nos. 116-17 in *Trier: Kaiserresidenz und Bischofssitz*, Rheinisches Landesmuseum (handbook), Trier, 1984).

the letter-forms as current by c.550. Repeating the ringed chi-rho, it reads INITIUM / ET FINIS (letters are conjoined only; no true ligatures). The allusion picks up the A ET W of 516 from Apocalypse.³⁰ Again, brief as this text may be, analysis may show why these precise words were chosen:

		<u>W</u>	<u>S</u>	<u>L</u>
1	INITIUM	1	4	7
2	ET FINIS	2	3	7
		3	7	14

– giving 7 syllables; twice 7 letters; line initials I E, 9.5 = 14, last letters M S, 11.17 = 28 (two examples of 1:2, duple ratio). All the letters of INITIUM make 87, all those of FINIS, 53; their total = 140, 7 times 20.

For a party of seven clerics, fully versed in Biblical style, accompanied by suitable literary baggage³¹ and with Latin as their first tongue, the most likely intercommunal form of address was surely *fratres*. Somewhat out of its Biblical context but completely appropriate would be a passage from the synoptic Gospel tale of Christ confounding the Saducees. Disbelieving any Resurrection, they had posed the case of a man dying without issue, leaving a wife who by Mosaic law the next available brother would have to marry. Hypothetically, six did so; in the next life, then, to which of them would she be the wife? Our Lord's reply; there will be no marriages, past present or future; all will be as angels in Heaven.

The opening premiss ("There were seven brethren") appears as:

Matthew, 22.25 erant autem apud nos septem fratres

Mark, 12.20 septem ergo fratres erant

³⁰ 1.8, *ego sum A et W principium et finis dicit Dominus Deus*; 21.6 *et dixit mihi factum est ego sum A et W initium et finis*.

³¹ On 516, the unique *praecipui sacerdotes* was referred to Rufinus of Aquileia's translation of Eusebius, *Hist.Eccles*, vii.cap.24 (with *praecipuus sacerdos*) by (Bishop) John Dowden, "Observations and Conjectures on the Kirkmadrine Epitaphs", *Proc.Soc.Antiq.Scot.*, 32 (1897-98), 247-74; in general, I follow his learned guidance in construing *sacerdos* at this period.

As so often in the Vulgate where a long or short clause contains a number, we find that Jerome (himself, here) arranges the words to make some minimal reference in Biblical-style computus to the subject. It is the Matthew version that has the fullest construction: and one can for convenience set it out thus.

E ran T A ute M A puD N oS S epte M F ratre S

After the prolonged dissection of 516 *Viventius*, readers will spot:

- (a) Six words about *seven* brothers; letter total = 30, *six* by 5.
- (b) Initials E A A N S F, 5.1.1.12.17.6 = 42, *six* by *seven*.
- (c) Last, T M D S M S, 18.11.4.17.11.17 = 78,
six by (*six-plus-seven*).
- (d) Extreme section of 30 falls at 11:19 → 30, and in the lesser part /E rantautem A/, E plus A, 5 plus 1 = *six*.
(and there are other features, but the above must suffice).

Not only would this have been obvious to persons familiar with the compositional mode; the devices overlap those in 516 *Viventius*. On the proposition that a Kirkmadrine band perceived “erant autem apud nos septem fratres” as peculiarly appropriate to themselves, we can continue with the favoured Matthew text. Jesus’s first conclusion (in 22,20) is *sed sunt sicut angeli Dei in caelo* (Mark, 12.23, and Luke, 20.36 differ from this and from each other). We notice it as having *seven* words, and 28, *seven* times four, letters. Lastly, with the second conclusion (22,32: “He is not the God of the dead, but of the living”) the postulated Biblical allusion closes on a surprisingly apt note:

non est Deus mortuorum sed *viventium*

To claim the Kirkmadrine clerics as Christian Gauls, settled in the Rinns around 500 and successively then dying there, is to work from inferences; but inferences that point the same way. The epigraphy (angle-bar A, sideways R, overlining) is Gaulish rather than British; HIC IACENT, a late 5th-century formula spreading from Gaul to

Britain.³² The ringed, open-looped chi-rho is not at home in the (limited) British development of the motif and the open rho suggest Gaul south of the Loire, as does the form of the terminals.³³ Of the proper names, Viventius and Florentius are continuing-Roman; the father of Gregory of Tours (*recte*, Georgius Florentius) was so named, and another Florentius was a consul, West, in 515. Mavorius and Ventidius are probably of Celtic origin but as likely to be from Gaulish (latinised) as from British. What must mark off the Kirkmadrine people – whom we know only from these inscriptions – is the appearance of their linked inscribed stones; the dissimilarity to any others in Scotland (and in Britain, except for 391 and 392); the pervading use of Biblical style composition and the dominance of *seven*; and the unifying and apposite explanation offered by the identifiable Vulgate passages. What points to their Christian status is a group of male-only names, absence of reference to parentage, the prominent ringed chi-rho motifs and the words SACERDOTES and (reportedly) *SUBDIACONUS in some form. These cannot be simply local Christian converts, in one isolated locality, of the early 6th century.

3. Kirkmadrine and Whithorn

One very persuasive explanation of a general failure, despite long ground and air reconnaissance, to find traces of any early Christian establishment at or near Kirkmadrine Old Kirk is that the site was never more than a half-century's worth of a small and subsequently evanescent, timber-constructed, private monastery. In archaeological terms there is nothing much to be discovered. There are no inscribed stones in the Rinns peninsula later than 518; the “-madrine” of Kirkmadrine, itself from some older place-name with Kil- (*Cill*), is

³² See J.K. Knight, “The Early Christian Latin Inscriptions of Britain and Gaul: chronology and context”, in *The Early Church in Wales and the West*, edd. N. Edwards and A. Lane (Oxford, 1992), 45-50.

³³ A. Frantz, “The Provenance of the Open Rho in Christian Monograms”, *Amer.Journ.Archaeol.*, 2nd ser., 33 (1929), 10-26.



Fig. 6 Galloway: relative locations of Kirkmadrine and Whithorn, in their adjacent peninsulas (Crown Copyright: reproduced from the current Historic Scotland guidebook).

hypocoristically Irish (**Mo-Draighen*, *Mo-Draighnech?*), and secondary; 7th or 8th century.³⁴

The suggested presence, so far to the north-west, of what might resemble a medium-term episcopal mission of modern times itself calls for minimal elaboration. The most that I can adduce would be the earlier instances of episcopal intervention from the Continent – Victricius of Rouen, Palladius and *familia* landing in Leinster in 431, the visits of Germanus and Lupus to (?) south-east England – with the obvious remark that, whether invited by churchmen in Britain or sent by Papal authority, we know that orthodoxy could be introduced to combat perceived Insular heresy. If that sounds extreme for sub-Roman Galloway, there *is* perhaps a hint from Bede; who was notoriously cautious in his handling of secondary information and whose all-too-brief passage concerning Nynia and what is now Whithorn may have excluded what he saw as no more than ancient rumour. Bede wrote that the British bishop Nynia had been “*regulariter fidem et mysteria veritatis edoctus*” (whether or not he, Bede, really credited that this had been at Rome; *Romae*). Is there some slight and intended weight given to Nynia’s orthodoxy; and is the absence of any record of any other episcopal figure here, over the following two or three centuries, significant?

My second proposal, and it is of course germane to the title-theme of “the conversions” (plural) of early Scotland, would be that in the middle or latter part of the 6th century any successors to the original *septem fratres* at Kirkmadrine – native converts, native (episcopally) *ordained* converts, further recruits from Continental orthodoxy – removed themselves from the Rinns to the Machars, the next peninsula eastward, and were incorporated within the *ecclesia* at Whithorn. With this I would associate at least five things. The first three, derived *via* the postulated Kirkmadrine establishment, share a Gaulish origin. They are: the establishment at Whithorn of a coenobitic monastery, where the

³⁴ Cf. J. MacQueen, “Kirk- and Kil- in Galloway Place-Names”, *Archivum Linguisticum*, 8.2 (Glasgow, 1956), 135-149; the background to this well-evidenced Irish presence is discussed in my Ardwall Isle report, *Medieval Archaeol.*, 11 (1967), at 177-183 with map.

5th-century *sinus* of Latinus and the infant daughter can only have been a small community church for the local *ecclesia* led by their (credible) bishop *Ninia; an introduction of the cultus of St Martin of Tours (at the least, a consecration of an altar with a Martinian representative relic); and the adduction to the original church, a replacement church, the surrounding monastery, or the entire complex, of the Latin name *Candida Casa*; not because of any physical or visible feature but because this is a direct calque on Gaulish-Latin **Louco-tegia*, -*tigia*, the older locative name of Martin's first stone church in the Late Roman villa subsequently (and still) known as Ligugé, dept. Vienne.³⁵

The last two things arise from a demonstrable fact, and a reasonable inference supported by (inscriptional) observations. The fact is that stones 516, 517 and 518 are part of a deep *literary*, Christian Latin culture; as yet hardly appreciated by post-Roman Insular scholarship but inexorably apparent as more and more of Biblical style composition, and what accompanied it, is recovered from longer writings and stone-cut memorials. At 6th-century Whithorn a serious lacuna in Christian affairs would have been the absence of a *vita*, or some *libellus miraculorum*, concerning bishop Ninia (we may drop the philological asterisk). I have long been persuaded by Professor John MacQueen's view³⁶ that a Latin Life *was* composed there, possibly in the 7th century and probably from an added stimulus as Irish monasticism became involved in the Whithorn area; there may of course have also been a subsequent, Old English, version of it but there seems no compelling reason to postulate that. Such a *vita* may have been preceded by written attempts to gather tradition, generated by those whose own literature must have included the famous *Vita Beati Martini* of Sulpicius Severus. The last feature takes us out of

³⁵ Gregory of Tours, *De Virt.S.Martini*, iv.30, calls the location *monasterium Locotigia* [*censim*]. In the context of the 516 computus and its key numbers, it can hardly have been missed that Sulpicius's B(eatu)S gives B S = 19, M(artinu)S, M S = 7 x 4, and *Beatus Martinus* contains 7 x 2 letters. This was in the nature of a bonus.

³⁶ See, *passim*, in his *St Nynia* (re-issued, Edinburgh, 1992), with references to earlier papers; I can follow him (p.11) in his "composite document *A", but not its Anglo-Saxon translation.

Whithorn, and across southern Scotland in the general direction of the Lothians. Insofar as can be estimated from shape and form, epigraphy, linguistic minutiae and sometimes the context, the Christian Latin inscribed memorials elsewhere in southern Scotland are not 5th century, of Ninianic times. They belong to the 6th and 7th centuries; regardless of the broader story of Christianity in the Lowlands, the inscribed-stone *fashion* is diffused (out of Galloway?) only from this proposed phase when the Kirkmadrine influences arrived at Whithorn. Further: few as they are, the range of Latin words employed on these memorials is not quite the same as that seen on the Welsh and south-west British stones and it includes (e.g.) LOCO, on 515 (the Yarrow Stone) and a reported, but lost, LOCUS from Peebles (*locus* “grave, resting-place”; Gaulish rather than British), one if not two line-height initial crosses (515 possibly: 511 *Coninie* certainly), again a Continental detail, and a 7th-century NEITANO SACERDOS on a small stone from Peebles. The inspiration behind these is not entirely Insular.³⁷

To credit the hypothesis of a post-550 revival (if that is the right word) of an episcopal church at Whithorn, arising from an earlier Gaulish “mission” in the Rinns, may be to wield Ockham’s razor (selectively). There would be no point in debating nuances of meaning in Late Latin *casa*, if *casa* merely translates Gaulish *tegia* (“maison”, with *attega* “hutte” – so Georges Dottin). That vexed question, the improbability of a formal church dedication to God in the name of Martin as early as 400-plus,³⁸ disappears if one sees this as a post-550 feature; as does the gross improbability of a full *monasterium* at Whithorn almost at the end of the Roman period. Did Ninia (*per* Bede) personally build – or cause to be built, or had built for him by his *ecclesia* – a church of stone, and was this really in a manner to which the British (which British?) were genuinely unaccustomed? 520 *Latinus* cannot tell us if “Latinus” and Ninia were one and the same (a married

³⁷ The texts of all these are given in full in my paper, n.4 above.

³⁸ See O. Chadwick, “The Evidence of Dedications in the Early History of the Welsh Church”, in *Studies in Early British History*, ed. N.K. Chadwick (Cambridge, 1959), at 181 (“the notion of a personal influence of Martin on Ninian at Whithorn can be disregarded”), and a general dismissal of any such idea.

bishop with *filia sua* would be entirely normal; on 325, the *sacerdos* BIVATISI mourns his *coniux* [AUD]IVA), but it is hard to upset the conclusion that a *sinus* was built, where Whithorn Priory came to stand, before 450. It may well multiply entities beyond reasonable necessity to dissociate the Whithorn Stone from the Father of the Kirk.

Bede's short statement, based on information that came from Ecgberht, or Pecthelm, or Trumwine, or all of them *seriatim*, stands as a report of c.730 if it can be seen to telescope the following:

- A British bishop Nynia, *sanctissimus* 5th century
- preaching to / converting *australes Picti* ?? unreal
- his seat at *ecclesia, S.Martini nomine* 6th century
- *vulgo vocatur Ad Candidam Casam* 6th century
- in which *ipse corpore requiescit* 5th century
- *ecclesiam de lapide fecerit* (but by "Latinus") 5th century
- *iam nunc Anglorum gens obtinet*^c 700-plus

Finally, for the place-names, we have lost any secular and locative British or Romano-Celtic name for Whithorn (burgh), distinct from *Candida Casa*, its ecclesiastical component. It must once have existed. What can be calqued, can be calqued again. If *Louco* + *tegia* could give *Candida* + *casa*, not so long afterwards *Candida* + *casa* gave *Hvit* + *aern*. "Whithorn" may be no more British than the names of those Kirkmadrine *sacerdotes*. It is an accident.

4. Postscript: *Usquequo*?

It seems right to borrow Jerome's precise little word³⁹ in voicing a legitimate last question that is bound to arise. Up to what point in time could visitors, viewers, readers, who knew any Latin (and they existed in quantity throughout the first millennium) stand in front of 520 *Latinus* or 516 *Viventius*, read the obvious sense of the plain words, but see *beyond* them to the first-order computus, the deeper computus, the Biblical allusions and (for 520) the mental image "display plan" of Solomon's Temple? Or must we assume (since no pre-medieval source begins even to hint to the contrary) that all this arcane knowledge

³⁹ Isaiah, 6.11, *et dixi usquequo Domine*, "How long, O Lord..."

perished shortly after the period of composition, or before the disruption of the Norse raids and settlements; and that these indisputable treasures of Scotland's earliest Christianity had to await their rediscovery in 1997, by a Cornishman from the other extremity of Britannia?

Our problem is that composition in Biblical style, on any medium, must have been transmitted and perpetuated through schooling; like the scholar's own exercises and notes, and the manuals of the post-Roman British *grammatici*, all this had a very low survival-value and in fact did not survive. We do not even know its basic vocabulary. It has been necessary to invent a new one – key numbers, LaN, triangularisation, precession-and-interval and the rest of it. So far, it can be shown from David Howlett's work there must have been practitioners of the whole compositional mode in, say, Wales up to the period of Anglo-Norman conquest. In Cornwall there is one commemorative inscription (1051, Penzance Market Cross) in this style with an internal, chronogrammatic, date of AD 1007.⁴⁰ Wales provides a dozen clear examples from the 5th to the early 9th centuries. Scotland as yet shows nothing later than the stones at Kirkmadrine.

The fame of early Whithorn offers the chance that something may be indicated, obliquely, if one knows where to look. That proves to be the case, but again it must involve accepting (with John MacQueen) a very strong probability of there having been a Latin *Vita Niniavi* (vel sim.) written at Whithorn some time before the Anglian domination that occurred in 700 x 720.

The short *praefatio* to Ailred of Rievaulx's 12th-century *Vita Niniani*⁴¹ recites Bede's passage; points out that, because of the general tenor of Bede's *Historia*, nothing more was included; and then tells us that he, Ailred, will make good that omission from a *liber de Vita et Miraculis* (which may be an actual title) that records the doings of

⁴⁰ This is analysed, with others, in my "Christian Latin Inscriptions in Cornwall in Biblical Style", *Journ.Roy.Institution Cornwall*, n.s.2, 2.4 (1997), in press.

⁴¹ Oxford, Bodleian Libr., MS Laud Misc.668, fos. 78-89; edited by A.P. Forbes in *Lives of S.Ninian and S.Kentigern* (Edinburgh, 1874), with unsatisfactory translation; now transl. W. MacQueen in J. MacQueen, "St Nynia", 102-124.

Ninia hystorico more. It was in other words a consecutive narrative; in all likelihood, from origins and birth, to death, enshrinement and posthumous miracles attesting Ninia's sanctity. When Ailred writes that this source *latius ... proponit* "deals more widely" with its subject he only implies that it amplifies Bede's curtailed statement; when he says that the book, which presumably he had borrowed, was *barbario scripta*, I take this to be an exculpatory complaint about its (il)legibility and nothing more. Ailred may have had a tattered little work in a hand of five centuries earlier. An immediate miscopying (from the titulus?) was of /n i n i a n u s/ from /n i n i a u u s/, which (after all) is why we have "Ninian".

The account of the building of Candida Case is dismissed in a couple of lines, apparently paraphrased from Bede (cap.iii). But (cap.ii), with Ninianus returning from Rome and stopping to visit Martin's principal church and shrine *ad civitatem Turonicam* (Tours), we suddenly have an irrelevant and unnecessary aside, concerning *this* church, not Whithorn at all:

*junguntur in tabernaculo Domini columnae
altera ad alteram duoque Cherubini
expandentes alas suas tangunt se mutuo
... nunc stantes et dimittentes alas suas*

Somewhat earlier, towards the close of the 8th century, a band of *discipuli, scolastici*, of the church at York sent to Alcuin a set of metrical compositions – as it might be, the Classical Sixth's verse-project upon a single theme – that survives as *Miracula Nynie Episcopi*⁴² (note how *Nynie*, gen., prefers Bede's *Nynia*). It may well be that the poems make use of an elaborate, early medieval, number-

⁴² Ed., from a Bamberg MS saec.XI, by Karl Strecker, *MGH IV*, ii & iii; the text, ed. W. MacQueen, in *Trans.Dumfries & Galloway NHAS*, 38 (1959-60), 21-56 (the 2 Chron. allusion is missed); transl., same hand, J. MacQueen, "St Nynia", 88-101. I cannot follow the MacQueens in taking this as of single authorship, or written at Whithorn; the contrary view (adopted) here is Dr Andy Orchard's (Cambridge), for a forthcoming publication.

symbolism⁴³ that seems to lie outside Biblical-style *arithmetica*; it has not been noticed that whichever *scolasticus* acted as convenor arranged the 14 poems so that “the first *nine* are devoted primarily to the miracles performed by the saint during his *earthly* existence, the succeeding *five* to his *posthumous* miracles”⁴⁴ (my italics). This is an opening advertisement of recourse to extreme ratio, since the apportionment as 5:9 → 14, from the set 1.4.5.9.14.23.37.60... is obvious.⁴⁵ A few early spellings seem to have survived; poem 1 calls him *Ninia* (6 and 13 have *Nyniau*), poem 4 has *Britanos*. It is the little 19-line poem 4 that tells how (Quomodo) the saint, *veniens patriam, Casam edificavit Candidam*. Within it, note:⁴⁶

- 85 *Fecerat et celsi veneranda cacumina templi*
 91 *sanctificans Domino Martini nomine dicat*
 92 *hec domus est Domini quam plures visere certant*
 93 *ardua mitrifici fulgent insignia templi*

Here is the (ultimate, common) source of both this York pupil on Candida Casa, and Ailred on Martin’s church at Tours:

2 Chronicles, chap.3

- 3 *et coepit S. aedificare domum Domini*
 10 *fecit enim in domi sancti sanctorum duo Cherubin*
 11 *et altera V cubitos habens alam tangeret alterius Cherub*
 13 *igitur alae utriusque Cherubin expansae erant*

⁴³ Most recently, J. MacQueen, “The Literary Sources for the Life of St. Ninian”, in *Galloway: Land and Lordship*, edd. R.D. Oram and G.P. Snell (Edinburgh, 1991).

⁴⁴ “St Nynia”, 9.

⁴⁵ Without analysis, it seems almost certain that each poem will contain (somehow encoded) its writer’s name; if there is any computus it will use 23-letter LaN (in the Bamberg MS, *Miracula* is followed by an abecedarian *Hymnus* of 27 couplets, with initials A to Z (23) and A.M.E.N.); and it is immediately obvious in poem 4, which has 113 words, that the extreme section falling at 70:43 picks out word no.70, *Christi*. Word 10 is *Domino*; word 70 plus 10, 80, is *Domino*. Other poems here seem to hold similar hints.

⁴⁶ Consecutive line numbers as in W. MacQueen’s edition.

15 ante fores etiam *templi* duas *columnae*

(with, perhaps, chap.5)

5 vasa sanctuarii quae erant in *tabernaculo*

8 ita ut *Cherubin* *expanderent alas suas*

From this, it strikes me as not only reasonable but obvious to infer that the missing Latin *Vita Niniavi* – of the 7th century? “perhaps between 550 and 650” (so MacQueen)? – contained a florid account of the building of what became Candida Casa, directly couched in the language of the Vulgate’s 2 Chronicles, 3-5; and that it did so because 520 *Latinus* was still prominent, visible and *wholly intelligible*. When we consider that the Life must have been written at Whithorn, alongside the glaring contrast in scale between a local church (however venerated) and the massive *templum* facilitated by Hiram of Tyre for the Great King with his workforce of thousands (1 Kings, 5, 13-18; edited out, for 2 Chronicles), no other conceivable reason to adduce this Biblical model exists.

The rest is silence, but I would guess from circumstances having nothing to do with a continued intelligibility of Biblical-style displays on stone. If Kirkmadrine sank back into isolated obscurity before 600, how many people would visit a half-forgotten little burial plot and examine a handful of inscribed memorials? At Whithorn, the report of the recent excavations shows a building-sequence of extreme complexity, one early peak being the post-700 advent of Northumbrian Christianity and the creation of a new Anglian see. Surely at this juncture the *Latinus* stone was discarded, or re-cycled into a wall, to await William Galloway in 1888. Fate deprives us of further useful comment. It is, nevertheless, apparent that these – the Kirkmadrine and Whithorn episodes – represent the earliest conversions of any part of Scotland and that, between the early 5th and 7th centuries, Galloway at least participated in a Christian Latin culture that extended from the shores of the Solway to Jerome’s Jerusalem. In opining that the Whithorn *Latinus* stone merits a national prominence not less than that

now accorded to the Stone of Destiny in Edinburgh Castle, I hope that others will join me in that, by no means grandiose, assessment.⁴⁷

⁴⁷ Beyond particular thanks to the Scottish Church History Society, Peter Hill at Whithorn, and the shades of the departed John Jamieson I gladly record my deep indebtedness to David Howlett (Oxford) for prolonged encouragement, corrections, and his many enrichments to these (and other) interpretations of our early inscriptions. In the correspondence that followed the delivery of the lectures, others asked fruitful questions and offered pertinent ideas; among them I would, especially, thank Kemp Davidson (Lord Davidson), Edinburgh.

